

Forced into a Quandary – Part One

"For the Son of Man is Lord of the Sabbath." Luke 6:5

The Gospels record three consecutive times Jesus argued with the Jewish religious leaders regarding the Sabbath. This first took place when Jesus healed the invalid lying near the pool of Bethesda,¹ the second when the disciples, walking through the fields, ate some grain,² and the third when Jesus healed the man with the withered hand while in the Synagogue.³

Years earlier, Israel angered God, resulting in His sending His people into the Babylonian Captivity. One of the reasons was Israel's failure to properly observe the Sabbath.⁴ While in captivity the people established the order of the Scribes and built synagogues in which the Scribes taught them the Law – with the objective of pleasing God. The problem they faced in regard to the Fourth Commandment dealt with applying a positive command; what does properly observing the Sabbath look like? It was their application of this command, and with it the attitude that they could obtain merit by what they did, that angered Jesus during His ministry. "He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt..."⁵ In their thinking, their rules did away with their need of Him.

Jesus reasoned that because He is "Lord of the Sabbath," the decision was His. In support of His assertion He performed miracles. He said, "...I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me; or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves."⁶ In essence He reasoned, "Since God is the Author of miracles, if He disapproved of my Words, He would not have performed these miracles through Me."

At this point the leaders of the religious establishment were in the "Valley of Decision." Do they abide by their understanding of God's will in this matter, or do they follow the leadership of Jesus?

¹ John 5:1-18 ² Matthew 12:1-8, Mark 2:23-28, Luke 6:1-5 ³ Matthew 12:9-14, Mark 3:1-6, Luke 6:11 ⁴ Jeremiah 17:21-27 ⁵ Luke 18:9 ⁶ John 14:10-11

Forced into a Quandary – Part Two

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When people who profess faith in Christ differ with you on the application of positive commandments, how should you respond in a way that is both biblically consistent and pleasing to God? In seeking to answer this important question, we establish the following important principles:

First, although you are obligated to obey your understanding of the application of positive commandments, **do not make your application obligatory for others.** It was one thing for the Scribes to apply their convictions to their own lives; it was wrong for them to insist that other people also obey them.

Second, when others do not obey what you consider the clear application of God's commandments, you cannot affirm them in their actions. Pertaining to the negative commands, failure to obey must result in discipline.¹ When believers insist that their understanding of what the **application of a positive commandment** looks like differs from yours, they are on their own and must await the Judgment of God for His commentary.

Third, although your understanding of God's will is obligatory for you, maintain a posture of dependence and humility. What biblically oriented person would have affirmed Abraham in offering his son as a sacrifice?

¹ Cf. I Corinthians 5